

TRAITS OF THE IDEAL NEGOTIATOR

Negotiation is one of the most difficult jobs to do. It requires a combination of traits not ordinarily found in the business world, or even in the professions.

The process of negotiating demands not only good business judgment, but a keen understanding of human nature. The bargaining table is the center of a tense drama. I know of nowhere in business where the alchemy of power, persuasion, economics, motivation, and organizational pressure come together in so concentrated a fashion, and so narrow a time frame. Nowhere is the return-on-investment potential so high as in the negotiating process.

What qualities do good negotiators need? Basically, you can look for these 13 traits as those needed to make a good negotiator:

1. The ability to negotiate effectively with members of one's own organization and win their confidence.
2. A willingness and a commitment to plan carefully and to know the product, the rules, and the alternatives. The courage to probe and check information.
3. Good business judgment. And the ability to discern the real bottom line issues.
4. An ability to tolerate conflict and ambiguity.
5. The ability to commit oneself to higher targets and take the risks that go with it.
6. The wisdom to be patient and thereby to wait for the story to unfold.
7. A willingness to get involved with the opponent and the people in their organization. That is, to deal in personal and business depth with them.
8. A commitment to integrity and mutual satisfaction.
9. An ability to listen with an open mind.
10. The insight to view the negotiation from a personal standpoint. That is, to see the hidden personal issues that affect the outcome.
11. Self confidence based on knowledge, planning, and good intraorganizational negotiation.
12. A willingness to use team experts.
13. A stable person. One who has learned to negotiate with oneself and laugh a little. One who does not have too strong a need to be liked.

Can anyone really fit a bill as thorough as this? Probably not; but the closer the negotiators fit these 13 characteristics, the better the negotiating is going to be.

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